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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study is an attempt to ascertain whether minorities in higher education are aware of the procedures and techniques needed in order to earn promotion and tenure. Specifically, the study was an attempt to find if the participants felt that the informal methods (friends, social gatherings, parties, etc.) were more effective in learning the procedure than the formal (explained by the employer) method; were written copies of the procedures given to them; and for the participants to list some suggestions that could assist newly employed faculty members in higher education. The findings showed that the participants believed that the informal method of acquiring information concerning tenure and promotion was more effective than the formal method. Consequently, minority faculty members were less informed than majority faculty because they were not invited to or did not attend as many social activities. In addition, the data revealed that about one-half of the participants were given policies concerning tenure and promotion. The third finding was that minorities must become assertive and seek answers to questions concerning promotion and tenure. (Author)

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UPWARD MOBILITY OF MINORITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 1972 and continuing to the present, many minorities have been eligible for promotion and tenure in higher education. This is true because the efforts of the Federal Government, through Affirmative Action, and special pressure groups caused many minorities to be appointed to tenure accruing position in higher education.[1] After approximately five years, these educators are eligible to apply for promotion and tenure. However, many of them find additional barriers in their paths.

RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

A search of the literature failed to reveal much empirical data on the topic. However, the search did reveal some relevant literature. Robert E. Staples supports the idea that black scholars are at a disadvantage when publishing is a criterion for promotion or tenure when he stated, "Any black scholar who has been teaching at a Negro College simply has not had the time to publish. He may have had to teach anywhere from 15 to 20 units a semester."[2] This statement is especially appropriate for use in this study because many of the minority professors are recruited from black universities.

The early stages of blacks being employed in positions in higher education saw many of these educators employed in positions that were not associated with departments or main streams of the university. Therefore, after three to five years these educators had not developed the necessary rapport with colleagues or credentials necessary to be recommended for promotion and tenure. Wiley, alludes to this problem by saying, "Almost all blacks in university administration occupy newly created positions that carry little power or authority."[3]

Many minority educators who worked at predominately black institutions served a special purpose. The educational opportunities they provided, according to Dr. King V. Cheek, Jr., "were not available in meaningful terms in the established colleges and universities. Although educational opportunity was the primary motive, these colleges were also established to perpetuate segregation as a way of life."[4] Consequently, it takes much psychological and moral searching for some minority educators to change from a counselor, father and every other person the student needs. This is another reason the adjustment to a highly competative university system is difficult for some educators to make.

A search of the literature reveals that many minority educators enter higher education at the lowest levels. Therefore, it requires about five years for them to earn a promotion to the next level. Donald Rouse,[5] in his paper presented to the American Educational Research Association in February, 1973 called this problem a "Black Plateau". This means that blacks and other minorities have not advanced to the upper ranks in higher education in any significant numbers presently.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is designed to ascertain if minorities at the entry levels (instructor and assistant) are aware of the procedures for getting promoted and tenured. Specifically, this study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. Are there written policies concerning promotion and tenure that are available to the participant?
2. Were copies of the tenure and promotion procedures given and explained to the participant during the first month of employment?
3. Are there informal methods (friends, social gatherings, parties, etc.) that are more effective in learning the procedures than the formal (explained by employer) method?

4. What are some suggestions for each newly employed educator in order for him to move continuously toward the goal of professional advancement?

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Many minority faculty members enter higher education without the experience or contacts needed to be successful. Many of these educators come from public school settings or other institutions where the focus on self improvement is quite different. Therefore, they find it difficult to make the adjustment from teaching to writing, researching, serving on committees and providing service to communities as well as teaching. A study of this nature is needed in order to make a percentage of the educators aware of the broadened scope they must work. Specifically, if newly appointed faculty members were more aware of the rules for professional advancement, they would complete activities such as research, service and work on committees beginning with their first year of employment.

LIMITATION

This study is accurate only to the degree the participants were candid in responding to the questions. It seems important to point out here that most of the participants were somewhat emotional when talking about procedures for upward mobility. Therefore, one must assume that fact outweighed emotions when discussing the sensitive issues.

PROCEDURE

In an attempt to secure a representative opinion of minorities in higher education, forty-seven participants were randomly surveyed or interviewed from four state-supported universities in Florida. The participants were met informally, or suggested by friends. The universities represented a cross section of the State Universities because they were located in urban

and rural areas, large and small (student enrollment) and with predominately white and predominately black enrollments. Data were collected by the use of tele-surveys, personal interviews and by the use of a written survey. On the survey, part A, the participants were asked to make a choice about each statement. The scale ranged from 1 - strongly agree to 5 - strongly disagree.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey consisted of a ten part questionnaire. The findings from each part of the questionnaire will be summarized. The parts that appear to be significant will be discussed.

Statements:

1. Newly employed faculty members are expected to know the procedures for promotion and tenure.

The participants were about equally divided concerning their beliefs on statement one. Twenty-three participants agreed with the statement and twenty-five participants disagreed with the statement. Hence, it was concluded that the participants were undecided concerning statement one.

2. Guidelines for accruing tenure and promotion are given/explained to new faculty members shortly after employment.

The participants were evenly divided when commenting on this statement. Twenty-four participants agreed and twenty-four disagreed with the statement. Again, as a group, it was concluded that about one half of the participants were given guidelines concerning tenure and promotion during the early months of employment.

3. Guidelines for promotion and tenure were discussed with the new faculty member by his friends rather than by his employer.

The participants agreed that the guidelines for promotion and tenure were discussed by friends and employer. Twenty-five participants agreed with the statement and twenty-three participants disagreed. However, most of them agreed that an explanation of procedures by friends was more

effective than the explanation given by the employer. They continued by saying that this is perhaps true because friends talked with them several times and the pace was slower.

4. Because of the informal system for receiving knowledge concerning tenure and promotion, a large percentage of newly employed white faculty members learn the guidelines faster than newly employed minority faculty.

Twenty-seven participants agreed with the statement. However, twenty-one participants indicated that they disagreed with the statement. It was interesting to note that four of the participants wrote comments stating that whites would learn the system faster if they were males. No further explanation was given.

5. Guidelines for accruing promotion and tenure are written; however, the new faculty member must find them himself.

Thirty-five of the participants agreed that written guidelines concerning promotion and tenure were available. However, they indicated that they were responsible for understanding the specific details of them. Some indicated that it was difficult for an educator without experience in higher education to understand the policies, especially when orientation to university life demanded most of their time. They felt that a follow-up to the original conference about two months later would have been more helpful.

6. Guidelines for upward mobility are written; however, new faculty members are briefed more fully at cocktail parties or at other informal gatherings.

The participants agreed forty-one to seven that most of the briefings concerning tenure and promotion are conducted at informal gatherings by friends. They stated that this kind of briefing worked to the detriment of many minority faculty members because they are not invited to many social affairs or they do not attend when invited.

7. Becuase most of the educators who recommend faculty for promotion and tenure are white or black, minority faculty must become almost super in order to get recommended.

Forty-two of the participants agreed that most of the persons making recommendations for a faculty member to advance are either white or black, depending upon the university. Therefore, an applicant must be "super" in the fact that he must learn the procedures and complete requirements to a degree that is more severe than the faculty of the majority race.

8. If publishing is a major criterion for professional advancement, minority faculty members are at a disadvantage because most of the acceptable companies are owned and operated by whites.

Thirty-eight of the forty-seven participants disagreed with the above statement. They agreed that many of the reputable companies and organizations which publish the leading journals are controlled by whites. Nevertheless, they indicated that many of them could get a fair shake if their work was of quality and they wrote to specific themes. They also recognize the fact that they are competing with persons who have had years of apprenticeship and the frustrations are great on occasions.

9. Different criteria should be used when evaluating minority faculty for promotion and tenure.

Forty-four of the forty-seven participants disagreed with the statement. Comments written and given verbally stated that minority faculty members wanted to be given the same opportunity and evaluated in the same manner as other faculty members. However, they spoke of a need to eliminate or to make the informal system available to everyone. The difficulty of this happening did not appear real. Consequently, they indicated that other methods must be found in order to accomplish the same goal.

The second significant part of the study was concerning suggested procedures that could be given to new facutly members in order to make them more aware of the tenure and promotion sequence. The list below was suggested by most of the participants.

1. Request a meeting with the department head or the dean in order to get an understanding of the procedures.

2. Study the tenure and promotion policies carefully and ask questions when needed.

3. Keep ears open, check the Board of Regents Policies and become thoroughly familiar with them.

4. Seek information from colleagues.

5. Reques follow-up meetings with department head and/or the dean after about three years.

6. Become active on departmental, college and university committees.

7. Request information concerning upward mobility when being interviewed.

8. Make recommendations for policy changes when needed.

9. Read journals, learn the themes and the criteria for writing manuscripts.

10. Talk with successful writers in the department.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the information found herein, the following conclusions are made:

1. Most of the participants were informed of the tenure and promotion policies during their interview. However, they didn't understand the specific details.

2. The informal method of acquiring information conerning tenure and promotion was more effective than the formal method.

3. Publishers are generally fair in publishing quality work written by minorities.

4. Minority faculty members are at greater disadvantages than majcrity members because of the informal method.

5. Minority faculty members must become assertive and seek answers to questions and solutions for problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon this study, the following recommendations seem appropriate to make:

1. A study of this nature be made in order to ascertain the opinions of new white faculty. The results should be compared with this study.

2. An indepth study of this nature, broader in scope, should be made in order to ascertain the opinions of minority faculty.

3. Faculty who are promoted and/or tenured should help orient new faculty.

4. Each new faculty member be made aware of studies of this nature and encouraged to read them.

5. Department heads and deans make certain that minority faculty members are aware of the procedures for tenure and promotion. In addition, the new educator is encouraged by the department head to improve himself during the first year of employment.

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